

Solent Gateway Newsletter, Edition 2 – February 2026



**Welcome from Richard Parkinson
Port Director, Solent Gateway**

Welcome to the second edition of the quarterly Solent Gateway Newsletter.

This newsletter aims to keep you updated on activity across Solent Gateway – from MOD and commercial operations to key developments across the port.

We began the year with exciting progress on Phases 3 and 4 of the Solent Gateway development. These works will deliver much-needed land to support both our MOD partners and commercial customers. Phase 3 will add a further 24 acres to the site, with Phase 4 contributing an additional eight acres. Both areas are expected to be completed in the autumn.

As part of the overall Solent Gateway development programme, we are continuing our close partnership with the Cadland Estate to ensure our Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) site not only meets requirements but continues to flourish.

January has already been busy at Solent Gateway, with several MOD operations and BYD commercial automotive vessel calls. The port remains full as we provide much needed import and export facilities for thousands of vehicles for the UK and global markets.

We are delighted to announce our 2026 Charity of the Year: Abby's Heroes. This amazing charity supports children, teenagers, young adults and their families, including bereaved families, who come under the care of the Piam Brown Ward, as well as the Teenagers and Young Adults (TYA) wards at

University Hospital Southampton. Our teams at ABP Southampton and SGL will raise funds through various events throughout 2026 including the Charity Quiz Night in March and the Test Way Walk in July. We are aiming to match or surpass the £20,000 raised in 2025 for Hampshire & Isle of Wight Air Ambulance (HIOWAA).

If you have any questions about our operations, please reach out to us by emailing
**abpsouthamptoncommunication
@abports.co.uk**

Yours sincerely,
Richard Parkinson
Port Director
Solent Gateway

Solent Gateway 2 – summary of our first round of consultation

We would like to thank everyone who took part in our first round consultation about our plans for Solent Gateway 2 from 16 September to 13 October 2025. Over the course of the consultation, we engaged with more than **1,200 people** and **received over 300 formal responses**.

The feedback we received has now been reviewed by the project team and will support the refinement of our proposals as our work progresses.

A summary of the most common feedback themes raised, along with our responses, was published in December 2025, and can be found on the document page of our website. Please [click here](#) to view or visit www.solentgateway2.co.uk/have-your-say/documents/



Artistic impression sketch of Solent Gateway 2. This is indicative and based on our emerging proposals.

Key themes raised during the consultation

The most common themes highlighted by respondents included:

- Existing **traffic congestion on the A326** and its effect on local air quality.
- The potential for reinstating the **Hythe Ferry** and opportunities for the introduction of new water taxis.
- The use of **existing rail links** for the importing and exporting of automotive vehicles.
- The use of existing **railway level crossings** and what this could mean for local traffic.
- The **noise** generated by additional **rail movements**.
- The potential resumption of the **Fawley branch line** for passenger transport.
- The **amenities and facilities** that could be included in the country park.
- The future **management, maintenance and ownership** of the new country park.
- A guarantee that the country park will be **protected from further port-related development**.
- Identifying and **mitigating any potential impacts on the protected wetland and intertidal habitats** of the River Test and the Solent.
- The principle of **building on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** and other designated landscapes.
- How landscaping measures could **manage visual and noise impact**.

- **Flood risk management**, and the potential need for the inclusion of flood defences to ensure year round access to the country park.
- **Environmental mitigation and compensation** as a legitimate means of protecting and enhancing environmental habitats.
- **Green energy generation** and its use on site.
- Areas covered by the **Design Principles** and when more information will be available.
- The **type of junction** that will be used to connect the proposed link road to the A326.
- The potential for an **increase in traffic** on local roads and in villages.
- Request for **active travel routes** connecting Marchwood and Hythe, with a focus on new cycle and walkways.
- The new **jobs and apprenticeships** that would be created as part of our emerging proposals.
- How the proposals would respect and promote **local heritage**.
- The potential for **new / managed access to the waterfront**, including footpaths and cycle paths.
- Working alongside and **supporting local communities**, groups, education providers, and businesses.
- Whether the site will **only be used for automotive handling** purposes.

What's next in 2026?

As the development of the project progresses, a number of key project milestones and engagement points are currently underway, including:

- Ongoing **survey and reporting** work across ecology, transport and marine to inform the scope of future assessments.
- Progressing of **ground investigation surveys** for marine and landside activities.
- **Maturing the design** of the developed areas and green areas.

- Extensive **stakeholder engagement**, including local authorities, parish councils, and the third Solent Gateway 2 Stakeholder Reference Group meeting in the spring, following the second one in January.
- Continued promotion of our **supply chain portal**, launched last year for businesses wishing to express interest in working with us.

Engaging with local communities remains a priority and we look forward to our next public consultation later in 2026, where we will share more detailed proposals and invite further feedback from local communities and stakeholders.



To stay informed and receive project updates, please register your details at:
www.solentgateway2.co.uk

WW2 Whale – progress update

You will recall that in the autumn 2025 we moved the WW2 Whale Bridge from the water (close to the Red Funnel ferry operation) to Solent Gateway. It is currently safely in storage while the planning conditions for the refurbishment works are approved by New Forest District Council. Once approved the works will begin and we hope the Whale Bridge will be on display acting as the gate guardian for ABP Solent Gateway later this year to celebrate the port's long history of supporting the UK's Armed Forces.



Solent Gateway 2 – surveys update

Marine and landside ground investigation surveys

Marine and landside ground investigation (GI) surveys are getting underway in February on the proposed Solent Gateway 2 site. This means that there will be works taking place both on the land and in the water over the coming weeks.

These surveys are standard procedure for large-scale developments, and all works have been assessed and approved by the relevant regulatory authorities including Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation and New Forest District Council.

The landside surveys started in early February and are expected to last for up to five weeks (including time for demobilising on site). The marine surveys are due to start later this month and are expected to last ten weeks. These investigations will establish baseline ground conditions across both the landside area and the marine footprint, providing critical data to inform the detailed design of the project as well as the associated environmental assessments.

Local residents may see an increase in activity at the site, including an increase in the number of vehicles accessing the site through Veals Lane. This collection of important data is to inform our design and environmental assessments. It does not constitute the start of construction.

By understanding the characteristics of the land and seabed at the outset, engineers and environmental specialists can refine designs, plan mitigation measures where needed, and ensure the project progresses in a safe, sustainable and compliant manner.

Land Interest Questionnaires

We're also issuing Land Interest Questionnaires (LIQs) to people and organisations who we think may have an interest in the land being proposed for Solent Gateway 2. This is a standard part of the planning process and being contacted in this way doesn't necessarily mean the land in question is going to be included in our final design for the project.

Solent Gateway – phase 3 and 4

The next stages of the Solent Gateway Limited (SGL) development are progressing well, with Phases 3 and 4 set to deliver significant new capacity across the site. In total, 32 acres of land will be developed into new operational space through these phases. This expansion represents an important step in supporting both MOD operations and ABP's commercial work.

Delivery is being supported by key partners including Knights Brown as construction lead, Arup providing design and engineering support, and New Forest District Council as the planning authority.

As part of the overall SGL development phases we have delivered local infrastructure improvements. Enhancements to roads and pedestrian routes – particularly around Cracknore Hard – will help improve safety, accessibility and overall connectivity in the surrounding area, supporting long-term community benefit alongside the site's continued growth.



Next Generation Education Outreach Engagement

Our Next Generation Education Outreach Programme has been in full swing since its launch in October. Designed to spark curiosity and open students' eyes to career paths they may never have considered, the programme is supported by ten ABP team members who are generously volunteering their time.

After our initial planning meetings, we kicked off the activity at Applemore College, where Barry Sadler delivered an engaging presentation about the Port of Southampton and his role as a Marine Pilot to students from Years 8, 9 and 10. We also welcomed Southampton University students studying for a master's in Logistics to the port for a supply chain and logistics presentation, followed by a tour of our Eastern and Western Docks.

January activities

We started the new year with three school engagement sessions as our Next Gen programme gathered even more momentum.

Redbridge School welcomed two of our speakers:

- Barry Sadler, Marine Pilot, who shared his career journey and explained the critical role pilots play in keeping Southampton moving.
- Karishna Bunwaree, Project Engineer, who spoke about her work on major dredging and engineering projects and her pathway into STEM, highlighting the growing opportunities available to young people.

Hounslow School hosted:

- Fay Draper, Cruise Manager, who offered students a behind the scenes look at cruise operations and shared her career journey – from working onboard cruise ships to managing them here at ABP.

What's ahead

In February, we return to Applemore College and will also be presenting at Solent University.

Looking ahead to March, we will be working with Hounslow School to deliver port tours for their Year 9 geography students and to support their engineering and science fairs.

These sessions reflect ABP's ongoing commitment to inspiring and empowering the next generation, showcasing the diverse and exciting opportunities across the maritime sector – from engineering and operations to sustainability and port management. Together, these efforts play a vital role in Keeping Britain Trading.